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The education of Abraham Lincoln

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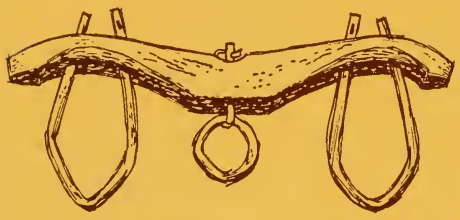

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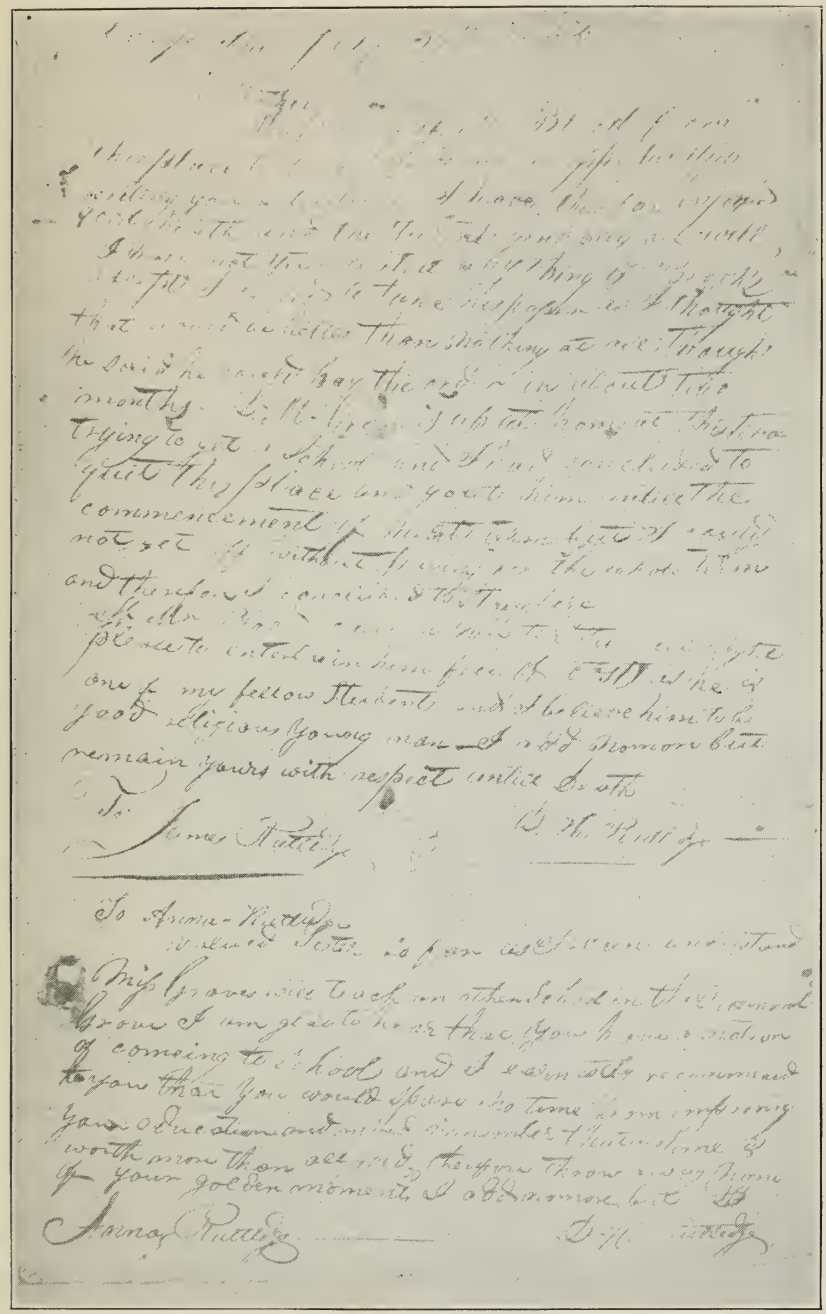
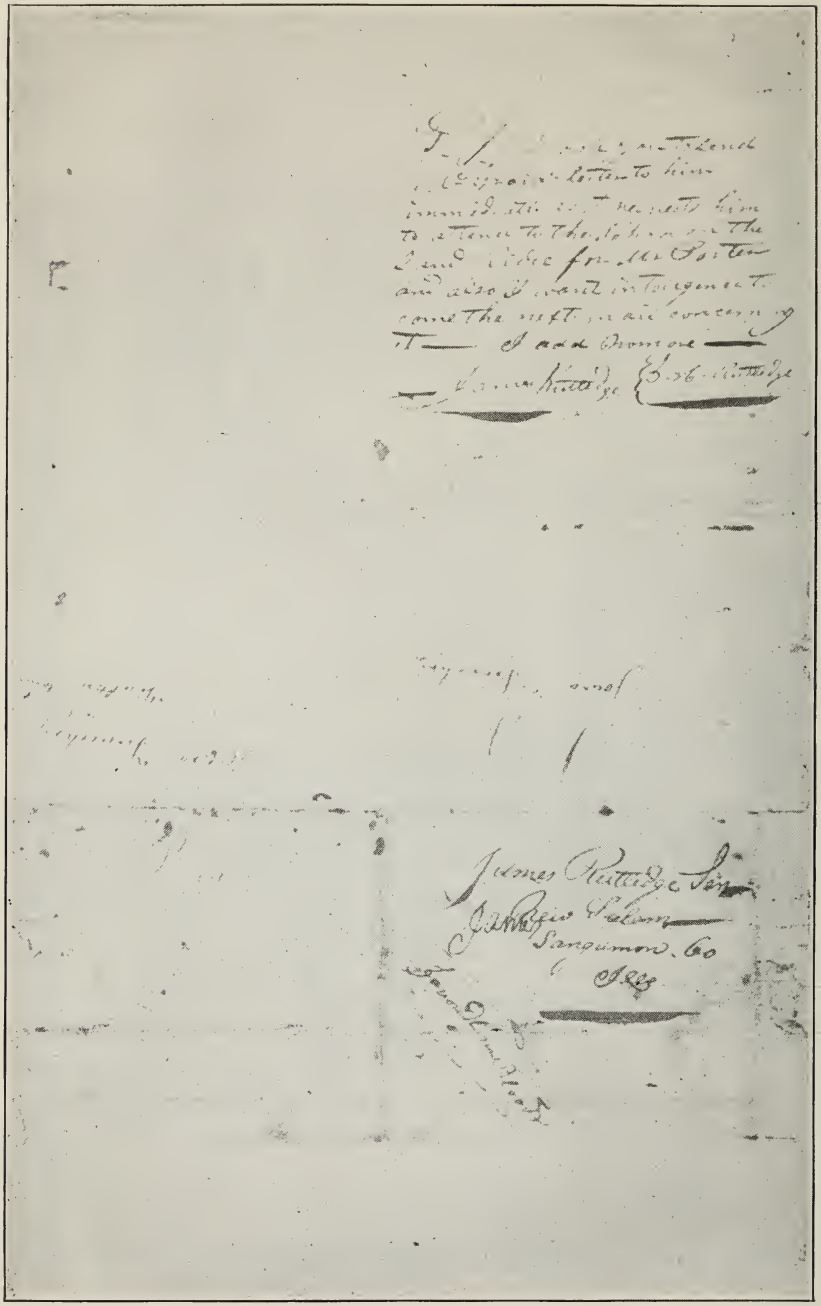
THE EDUCATION
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN





The Education of Abraham Lincoln

An Address

Delivered before the Faculty and Students of

Illinois College

Jacksonville, Illinois, February 7, 1923

By

William E. Barton, D. D., LL. D.

Author of "The Soul of Abraham Lincoln"
"The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln", etc.

COURIER PRESS
Jacksonville, Illinois

The letter of David Rutledge to his father and his sister Ann, which was for some months in my possession, is now the property of Mr. Henry B. Rankin of Springfield. It is reproduced in fac-simile by his courtesy. It's use on the platform in this lecture and its publication in this brochure constitute its first presentation to the public. It is Mr. Rankin's purpose that ultimately it shall be placed in a fire-proof museum at New Salem.

W. E. B.

THE EDUCATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

It is an honor, as it is also a pleasure, to speak to you today on The Education of Abraham Lincoln. Appropriate as that theme would be as the title of an address before the faculty and student body of any educational institution in America, there are valid reasons why the subject should have a special interest here. That Abraham Lincoln sustained a peculiarly close relation to this institution is known, of course, to all of you; and it is my purpose today to show that that relation was closer than is generally known, closer, perhaps, than any of you realize.

But even if I were able to add nothing to your present knowledge of Lincoln, I should not think it superfluous to speak to you about him. We can never afford to permit an ennobling event or relationship to become commonplace. It is important that we hold in memory and appreciation whatever makes life more worthy. Wordsworth taught us a needed lesson concerning nature's most beautiful phenomenon:

"My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old—
Or let me die."

When the time comes that we can behold a rainbow and not be thrilled by it, then in the midst of life we are in death. Wherever we find ourselves able to live where great men have trodden and not feel a sense of exhileration, then, whether we be young or old, we have permitted something very precious to die out within us. Abraham Lincoln's relation to Jacksonville and to Illinois College was very close and interesting. I earnestly hope that President Rammelkamp will write out for publication the story of that relationship. I am not attempting today to cover that ground. But I carry no owls to Athens when I speak in this place, where the story is better known than in most places, of The Education of Abraham Lincoln.

When Abraham Lincoln went to Congress in 1847, he found himself confronted with a blank which he was expected to fill out, giving an outline of his life. Opposite the word "Education" he wrote, "Defective." All his life he was painfully conscious of the defectiveness of his education. If by education we are to understand the completion of any course of study in school or in preparation for entrance upon the work of a profession, then Lincoln's education was indeed defective. But the world, as it studies the life of Lincoln, tends more and more to think of him as a man with a fairly good education, an education in some respects almost ideal for the task which he assumed.

Let us review, rapidly, the grades of his education, and his several promotions as a scholar.

First, there were two brief periods of study in Kentucky "blab-schools" where the pupils studied aloud to assure the teacher that they were not wasting their time. His two Kentucky teachers were Zachariah Riney and Caleb Hazel. Probably his only text-book in that State was a speller, and the first is said to have been Dillworth's; but later he used the Webster "Blueback." The method of instruction in that day was that the pupil should spell through the book several times before he learned to read. His first reading lessons were the short sentences given as exercises under each group of words in the spelling book. A student had to be proficient in spelling all the separate words in the book before he was allowed to put even the simplest words together. The single letter was supposed to be the unit of instruction, and the next unit was the word. As the alphabet was first learned from A to Z before any words were constructed, so the spelling of all the words in the book was learned before any sentences were formed. Lincoln learned to spell "incomprehensibility" in the list of "words of eight syllables accented upon the sixth" before he learned to read "Is he to go in?" and other sentences in words of two letters each; and it was a milestone in his education when his new learning conveyed to him the information that "Ann can spin flax." Judged by present day methods, this was not the best way to begin an education; but faulty as it was it had certain merits. Lincoln became a good speller. Usually he spelled down the school. Lincoln's misspelled words in after life were infrequent. He was a much better speller than Washington. For that matter, it is only within the last century that education has determined to rob orthography of all originality.

In Indiana, Lincoln attended school for three brief periods, his teachers being Azel W. Dorsey, Andrew Crawford and a man named Swaney. There he studied the English Reader, and he made progress with Pike's Arithmetic as far as the Rule of Three. There was use of the English Bible as a text-book for reading.

In his home, Lincoln read the Bible, Weems' Life of Washington, Robinson Crusoe, Pilgrim's Progress, Aesop's Fables, and an unidentified History of the United States. Later he read the Arabian Nights, Weems' Life of Franklin, and the Statutes of Indiana. It was an excellent library. It would be well for almost any American boy to have these books and no others for a full year, substituting a better biography of Washington for that of Weems, and supplying a better and more complete History of the United States.

In New Salem, he studied Kirkham's Grammar, and he used thereafter remarkably good grammatical forms, though he often split his infinitives and made some minor errors in diction. There he studied surveying and law. There he began to read poetry, and there he read books on religion, some of them adverse to religion as there and then understood.

By this time he was twenty-eight years of age, and had been admitted to the bar. He removed from New Salem to Springfield in 1835, and there he began the practice of his profession.

We are now to think of his formal schooling as complete. When he said good-bye to Mentor Graham, who taught him grammar, and to the friends who helped him to a knowledge of surveying, he may be understood to have graduated.

He knew that many men in his profession in Illinois had more of formal education than he possessed. He knew that to a certain extent he was handicapped for lack of more learning. But he decided not to go to school any more.

Some years ago William Allen White wrote a book, entitled "The Court of Boyville." Therein he set forth that if one particular man living in Leavenworth, Kansas, had, on a certain night in 1865, eaten only two pieces of pumpkin pie for supper, a President of the United States would have been removed from his high office. But the pie was unusually good, and he ate three pieces, and in consequence did not attend a Republican caucus in his ward that night. For the lack of his vote, there was a tie, and the chairman broke the tie by a vote for a set of delegates to the approaching municipal or county convention

other than the set for which the man with colic would have voted if he had been present and able to keep his mind upon the business of the evening. In consequence, a different set of delegates went from Leavenworth to the convention of the legislative district, and a man was elected from that district to the legislature other than the man who would have been chosen if the pie had not been so good. By the margin of that one vote, a different man was elected to the Senate of the United States than would otherwise have been chosen. From that point on, everyone knows the story. Andrew Johnson had been impeached by the House of Representatives, and it was known how every Senator would vote, except Senator Ross, the newly elected Senator from Kansas. What he did caused him to be ostracised, and he lived and died a political and almost a social outcast; though he appears to have done what he believed his duty, and what by this time most of us are glad he did.

I once asked Mr. White whether this was truth, or only a good newspaper story, and he told me that he obtained the information and heard the working out of this story by a reliable man, and he believed it to be correct.

I hope that not many people have bought and read, "The Ifs of History," by Joseph Edgar Chamberlain, formerly of the Boston Transcript, because if more people had read it, I should have less pleasure in quoting it. He tells us, for instance, that if the voters of Athens had not grown weary of hearing Aristides called "The Just", in consequence of which weariness they banished him, and if a most reprehensible political trick had not resulted in the election of Themistocles as his successor, the Christian world, as it now is, might never have heard of Christ, and we all should probably have been disciples of Zoroaster. And he tells many other startling things, out of which I could make an interesting address, especially if I were not compelled to use quotation marks.

I have in mind another inquiry. If Ann Rutledge had lived, and had married Abraham Lincoln, what would have happened to Booker T. Washington and to the world?

I am not unaware that William H. Herndon has answered this question by saying that Lincoln, being an indolent and home-loving man, would under those conditions have settled down comfortably in Springfield, and lost his ambition or the energy essential to putting it into effect. Herndon's conclusion, as everyone knows, was that Mrs.

Lincoln's unmerciful nagging drove Lincoln away from home into politics, and made him President. I have much more sympathy and charity for that much abused woman than Herndon had. Sometime I expect to tell what I believe about Mary Todd Lincoln, but not now. Nor am I approaching the inquiry from Herndon's point of view. I draw no present contrast between that fine girl, Ann Rutledge, and that proud and ambitious, and I think faithful, woman, Mary Todd Lincoln, but I raise the question because it suggests a rather unusual point of inquiry. What would have happened if Ann Rutledge had lived?

In the first place, I do not think that she and Abraham Lincoln would have married immediately, nor do I think the reason would have been any lingering fondness upon her part for any other man. The notion that her heart was torn between her new love for Lincoln and an earlier and recurrent affection for John McNamar, I do not credit. I shall some day tell who was the source of that story, and why I think it untrue and unworthy. I think that Lincoln and Ann Rutledge sincerely cared for each other, and that no shadow of a former love was cast between them by any haunting memories of hers. The reason why Lincoln and Ann Rutledge would not have married immediately was that Ann felt unfitted to be the wife of as great a man as she believed Lincoln was destined to be, and wished to go to school and have him go to school. The last sister of Ann Rutledge lived until last summer. Sarah Rutledge Saunders died in Lompoc, California, May 1, 1922. For some years before her death I was in correspondence with her, and, in the summer of 1921, I went to California and visited her and made a photograph of her. She was at that time in bed with a broken hip, but was able to be lifted, and I lifted her into a wheeled chair, and rolled her out into the sunshine and made a picture of her, the last that was taken, as I suppose, for from that bed she did not arise thereafter, except for a few moments at a time to rest, and this at infrequent and lengthening intervals.

With her, and with a considerable number of nieces and nephews and her one surviving son, I discussed all phases of the question concerning Lincoln and Ann Rutledge. What I am now giving relates to this matter of the desire of Ann that she should go to school, and that Abraham also should secure a better education to fit him for the large work which even then he believed he had before him.

It is not surprising that Ann Rutledge believed that Lincoln was

to accomplish great things. Mary Todd believed that. Indeed, Mary Todd firmly believed that he would some day be President. Ann Rutledge had no such thought as that; but her family had in it a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a Governor, and some judges, and other officials. Lincoln had been a candidate for the Legislature, and on his second attempt in 1834 had been successful, and she had heard him and his friends talk in the Rutledge Tavern about his political future. Of course she believed in him, and wanted the best for him that could be secured. And she wanted to be fitted to be the wife of such a great man as she thought he was sure to be.

This tradition is clear in the Rutledge family, and I had it from "Aunt Sally Saunders," her sister, and from others of the Rutledge connection.

Where did she plan that she should go to school, and what were Lincoln's plans if she had lived?

Their plan was that he should go to Illinois College at Jacksonville, and that she should attend the Female Academy at Jacksonville.

David Rutledge, Ann's brother, was a student at Illinois College at the time of the courtship of Lincoln and Ann. At least two other young men from New Salem were students there. They were friends of Lincoln. Lincoln himself procured a book of Greek exercises, and seems to have considered whether he might secure a classical education. That book I have seen and examined. It indicates that Lincoln had more or less definitely in mind the possibility of his going to college. It was more than a possibility. Mrs. Eleanor Atkinson, in an excellent magazine article, has reminded us that there were three colleges then in Illinois, and that Lincoln knew of them all and had opportunity of attending any one of them. If he had attended any, it would certainly have been Illinois College, at Jacksonville.

I learned from "Aunt Sally" that she had one letter addressed to Ann, the only letter the family had that she received from anyone, and perhaps the only one that was addressed to her by any member of her own household. This letter she loaned to me, with the privilege of use. To my great delight, I found it had an important bearing upon the question of Ann's plans for an education. The letter was written to her from Jacksonville, where her brother David was in college, and it dealt directly with her own purpose to go there the next autumn, and he encouraged the plan. It was really three letters in one, all on the two sides of one sheet, with room still saved for the address. The

main letter was to David's father, James Rutledge. The first postscript was to Ann. The second postscript was to James Kittridge, concerning the district school at Sand Ridge, where the Rutledges had their farm. The letters are in the stiff and formal language of the time. Postage cost a good deal, and David had opportunity to save postage by sending this letter by a schoolmate. The letter to his father read thus:

"College Hill, July 27, 1835.

"Dear Father:—

"The passing of Mr. Blood from this place to that affords me an opportunity of writing you a few lines. I have thus far enjoyed good health, and the students generally are well. I have not collected anythings of Brooks, except that I agreed to take his paper as I thought that that would be better than nothing at all, though he says he could pay the order in about two months. L. M. Greene is up at home at this time trying to get a school, and I had concluded to quit this place and goe to him untill the commencement of the next term, but I could not get off without paying for the whole term, therefore I concluded to stay here.

"If Mr. Blood calls on you to stay all night, please to entertain him free of cost, as he is one of my fellow students and I believe him to be a good religious young man. I add nomore, but remain yours with respect untill death.

"D. H. Rutledge.

"To James Rutledge."

You will not fail to note the value of a refusal by a college treasurer to refund to a departing student a portion of his term bills as an element of value in holding a stable student body. David Rutledge had determined to go home, but when the college treasurer refused him a rebate, he resolved to stay on, and get his money's worth in education. That is something of which college treasurers may properly take note.

It will be noted also that a year's subscription to a newspaper, though not greatly prized, was considered better than nothing, and that an editor's promise to pay in two months was not rated highly.

The Greene brothers, to one of whom this letter makes reference, were friends of David Rutledge, as they were of Abraham Lincoln, and their home-coming for vacation teaching must have been a matter of general comment.

The second postscript had to do with school teaching. McGrady Rutledge, a nephew of James and cousin of David, had been asked to

secure the teaching of the Sand Ridge school for another student named Porter. The Sand Ridge school was near the Rutledge farm, though several miles from New Salem. To Sand Ridge the Rutledge family retired after the Tavern failed, and there Ann and her father died. Ann did not die in New Salem, as most writers suppose, but several miles from there. We may quote, out of its order, the second postscript, which is to James Kittridge:

"P. S.—I wish you to send McGrada's letter to him immediately as it requests him to attend to the school on Sand Ridge for Mr. Porter and also I want intelligence to come the next mail concerning it. I add nomore.

"D. H. Rutledge.

"James Kittridge."

David spelled "nomore" as a single word, and that was the way it was pronounced in formal discourse, a kind of "Amen." It was a word sometimes uttered with great solemnity in sermons, a word of two syllables, accented on the second.

The first postscript is the part of the letter of the greatest interest. It reads:

"To Anna Rutledge:

"Valued Sister. So far as I can understand Miss Graves will teach another school in the Diamond Grove. I am glad to hear that you have a notion of comeing to school, and I earnestly recommend to you that you would spare no time from improving your education and mind. Remember that Time is worth more than all gold therefore throw away none of your golden moments. I add nomore, but &c.

"D. H. Rutledge.

"Anna Rutledge."

This letter is in full accord with the Rutledge tradition. Ann Rutledge and Lincoln were engaged to be married, and she desired to wait at least a year to attend The Jacksonville Female Academy. This, the only Girls' Seminary in Jacksonville in 1835, was merged with Illinois College in 1903. Ann had written or sent to her brother an inquiry concerning the school, and of her hope to be a student there in the fall of 1835. Lincoln, as he and she dreamed over the matter together, was to have entered Illinois College, at least for a year.

Ann Rutledge must have been sick when her brother wrote this letter. It was dated July 27, 1835, and she died August 25, 1835, after a sickness of about six weeks. Lincoln was not living in the house in which she died. He went over, riding from New Salem to

Sand Ridge, and visited her once during her illness. What they said to each other no one knows.

No one remembers the funeral of Ann Rutledge. "Aunt Sally" had rather a clear impression that her cousin, Rev. John Cameron, conducted the service. He was a Cumberland Presbyterian, as were the family of the Rutledges. The father of that sect, Rev. James McGrady, was a personal friend of the family, and James Rutledge was converted under his ministry.

What would have happened if Ann Rutledge had lived, and she had gone to the Jacksonville Female Academy in the autumn of 1835, and Abraham Lincoln at the same time had entered Illinois College?

Could Lincoln have gone to college? Certainly he could. Other young men as little prepared in education and with as little money did go to Illinois College. Newton Bateman, whom Lincoln was to know well as State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Illinois, starved his way through Illinois College, and Richard Yates, the War Governor, went there, and Richard Oglesby got through two years at Mount Morris. These were Lincoln's contemporaries, and they were, some of them, as poor as he. Lincoln could have gone to college, and if Ann Rutledge had lived, he probably would have gone.

I do not think that Ann Rutledge planned to go to Jacksonville unless Lincoln also went. She had had one love affair that ended unhappily, and she was not likely to go away deliberately and leave her lover for a year. The Rutledge tradition appears to me to have every appearance of probabaility, that the plan of Ann to attend the Female Academy was thought out jointly by Abraham and Ann, and had joined to it his plan for at least a year of study at Illinois College. Every student of Illinois College has a right to think with greater pride of his Alma Mater because it was, in imagination and hope, the college of Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln might have spent here the seven years which he spent at New Salem, and graduated with a smaller debt than he had when that little city "winked out." I cannot help wondering whether this College or any college would have done more for him than New Salem did.

On August 6, 1834, Lincoln was elected a member of the Illinois Legislature. At Vandalia he met the heads of the three Illinois colleges as they came to the capital in the interests of their respective schools. Shurtleff College was at Upper Alton, and McKendree at Lebanon. Lincoln knew of both of them. But he knew more still

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about Illinois College, which had been operating since 1830 at Jacksonville, only twenty miles away from New Salem. Far from its having been unthinkable for Lincoln to go to college, it was impossible for him not to think of it. William G. Greene, and his brother alluded to in David Rutledge's letter, and David himself, were constant reminders that a young man eager to learn could go to Jacksonville practically without money, and the college would provide work, and admit him to its preparatory department, and hold out before him the hope of a real diploma and a degree. Illinois College had a faculty of four Yale alumni, who were graduates in Divinity, also. Three of them were men of distinction. They were the President, Edward Beecher, and Professors Jonathan Baldwin Turner and Julian M. Sturtevant. To have been associated with these men, in classes so small that every student was an intimate friend of the teacher, would of itself have been a liberal education. Edward Beecher was a brother of Henry Ward Beecher, and an author of note, as well as an inspiring teacher.

One thing a year or more would have done for Abraham Lincoln, it would have given him a more reasonable and progressive theology than he had ever heard preached. Illinois College was founded under the Plan of Union of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. These Presbyterians were of the New School, and very different from those whose preaching Lincoln had heard. Under the teaching of such men as these, Lincoln would have found some of his religious difficulties materially helped. Some of his theological opinions would have been modified. He would have known the current thought in New England theology, a system which, whatever its faults, believed in fearless thinking and in intellectual and spiritual progress.

It requires no very vivid stretch of the imagination to think of Abraham Lincoln as emerging from Illinois College a Congregational minister, or possibly a New School Presbyterian. The former would have been rather the more likely, because his early training as a Baptist would have made him familiar with the Congregational form of Church government.

Of course he would have come out an ardent abolitionist, as were the men who would have been his teachers and his fellow students, including his subsequent law-partner, William H. Herndon. Lincoln would not have waited so long nor gone through so patient an evolution in the working out of his theories of human freedom.

We can imagine him as holding joint debates, not with Stephen A. Douglas, on politics, but on theology, with Peter Cartwright and other Methodists on the one hand, and with Old School Baptists and old line Calvinists of the Southern Presbyterian type on the other.

Maybe he would have entered politics by the way of the ministry, as Peter Cartwright did, and as Senator Edwin D. Baker did, and as he would have found opportunity to do.

Perhaps he would have stuck to the law, and let others preach the gospel, and would have gone on with his legal studies established on a firmer base of cultural learning. Would he have been a better educated man if he had gone to college? Would he have served God and his country better than he did? Or was the education which he had better than any college could have given him? What would have happened to Abraham Lincoln and the country if Ann Rutledge had lived?

The Scribes and Pharisees, graduates of the schools of their time, inquired wonderingly concerning Jesus, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" By letters, of course, they meant literature. They wondered that He, whose educational advantages had been only those of the ordinary Jewish peasant lad who had attended the school of the local synagogue, possessed, as they discovered Him to possess, the essentials of a liberal education. Most of us have had occasion now and then to express surprise at the culture and wisdom of some man or woman of limited educational opportunities. I have heard men who could scarcely read who were evidently men of mental discipline. I have heard men whose ordinary speech was ungrammatical who rose to something like nobility of utterance in prayer.

In most cases I have known the secret, or at least an important part of the secret of this culture adapted to circumstance, in a knowledge of the Bible. Certainly this was true of Jesus, and it was true of Lincoln. Lincoln used the Bible as a text-book in the common schools of Indiana. He read it in his home. He became familiar with its content so that he was quick to notice an unfamiliar passage* and to look it up and discover "whether it was so in his Bible."

Lincoln's concise, exact, forceful style was derived from profound study of the Scriptures. He entered upon his series of debates with

* An interesting incident in this connection is his dispute with Hon. H. C. Deming of Connecticut, concerning the Levites appointed to guard the causeway, in I Chronicles 26:17-18. See Deming's Memorial Address on Lincoln, pp. 41-42.

Stephen A. Douglas, basing his position on the words of Jesus, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." He used Biblical phrases and allusions freely, and as one to whom the content of the Bible was familiar. His last and noblest address, the Second Inaugural, was profoundly Biblical. There if anywhere Lincoln uttered the deepest convictions of his heart. The education of Lincoln was fundamentally Biblical. To any student who would know the secret of his literary style, I commend a thoughtful study of the English Bible.

It is alleged that in his youth Abraham Lincoln read every book he could get his hands upon, and that he "borrowed every book within fifty miles." We must allow something for exaggeration. But in his youth, he would appear to have been a diligent reader. He got bravely over it. As Herndon says, "He read less and thought more" than any other man in public life in that day. For the most part, we read too much; and almost every one of us reads too much trash. The time we waste in useless reading is worse than wasted. We weaken our memory by reading so much that we do not care to remember.

But Abraham Lincoln's education did not stop with his schooling. He was not even one of those men who looking back are able to say that their education was interrupted by their schooling. He learned in school and he learned after he left school. In school he had no desk, but sat on a puncheon bench, whose four legs were driven through auger-holes and not sawed off where they projected above the surface of the seat; that would have been considered a needless concession to the flesh. If he wanted to write, he put his bare feet on the puncheon bench in front of him, and made a desk of his knees. His teachers knew nothing of modern methods, and the methods they knew were defective enough, but he learned. "Lickin' and l'arnin' " went together in those schools, and Lincoln got both of these in school and afterward. Nature's method of teaching is a word and a blow, with the blow first.

We have some knowledge of Lincoln's post-graduate studies.

In February, 1860, Lincoln went to New York and delivered his Cooper Union address. He continued his journey into New England, and spoke at New Haven and elsewhere. Rev. J. P. Gulliver talked with him after his address in Norwich, Connecticut, and wrote out the interview as he remembered it. This was widely published in 1865, soon after Lincoln's death, and appears in Brockett's Life of Lincoln, published in that year, as follows:

" 'I want very much to know, Mr. Lincoln, how you got this unusual power of PUTTING THINGS. It must have been a matter of education. No man has it by nature alone. What has your education been?'

" 'Well, as to education, the newspapers are correct—I never went to school more than twelve months in my life. But, as you say, this must be a product of culture in some form. I have been putting the question you asked me to myself, while you have been talking. I can say this, that among my earliest recollections, I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I don't think I ever got angry at anything else in my life. But that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down, and trying to make out the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings. I could not sleep, though I often tried to, when I got on such a hunt after an idea, until I had caught it, and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over, until I had put it in language plain enough as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has since stuck by me, for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it North, and bounded it South, and bounded it East, and bounded it West. Perhaps that accounts for the characteristic you observe in my speeches, though I put the things together before.'

" 'Mr. Lincoln, I thank you for this. It is the most splendid educational fact I ever happened upon. This is GENIUS, with all its impulsive, inspiring, dominating power over the mind of its possessor, developed by education into TALENT, with its uniformity, its permanence, and its disciplined strength, always ready, always available, never capricious—the highest possession of the human intellect. But let me ask, did you not have a law education? How did you prepare for your profession?'

" 'O, yes. I READ LAW, as the phrase is; that is, I became a lawyer's clerk in Springfield, and copied tedious documents, and picked up what I could of law in the intervals of other work. But your question reminds me of a bit of education I had, which I am bound in honesty to mention. I thought, at first, that I understood its meaning, but soon became satisfied that I did not. I said to myself, 'What do I do when I DEMONSTRATE, more than when I REASON or PROVE? How does DEMONSTRATION differ from any other proof?' I consulted Webster's Dictionary. That told of certain PROOF, "proof beyond possibility of doubt;" but I could form no idea of what sort of proof that was. I thought a great many things were proved beyond a possibility of doubt, without recourse to any such extraordinary process of rea-

soning as I understood 'demonstration' to be. I consulted all the dictionaries and books of reference I could find, but with no better results. You might as well have defined 'BLUE' to a blind man. At last I said, 'Lincoln, you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what DEMONSTRATE means.' And I left my situation in Springfield, went home to my father's house, and stayed there until I could give any propositions in the six books of Euclid at sight. I then found out what 'demonstrate' means, and went back to my law studies.'

" 'I could not refrain from saying, in my admiration for such a development of character and genius combined, 'Mr. Lincoln, your success is no longer a marvel. It has been a legitimate result of adequate causes. You deserve it all, and a great deal more. If you will permit me, I would like to use this fact publicly. It will be most valuable in inciting our young men to that patient, classical and mathematical culture which most minds absolutely require. No man can talk well unless he is able, first of all, to define to himself what he is talking about. Euclid, well studied, would free the world of half its calamities, by banishing half the nonsense which now deludes and curses it. I have often thought that Euclid would be one of the best books to put on the catalogue of the Tract Society, if they could only get people to read it. It would be a means of grace.'

" 'I think so,' said he, laughing; 'I vote for Euclid.' "

It is evident that in some minor particulars, Mr. Gulliver's memory was at fault, as for instance, where Lincoln is quoted as saying that he "became a lawyer's clerk in Springfield." That was what Mr. Gulliver understood when Lincoln told him that he began his legal career in the office of an older lawyer. It is interesting also to note another minor error in which Lincoln is made to say, that, in his effort to learn the meaning of the word "demonstrate," he "went home to his father's house."

Undoubtedly Lincoln used the expression "went home," and Mr. Gulliver supposed he meant that he went to his own father's house at the beginning of his legal career. As a matter of fact, that was not what Lincoln meant. He went back to his own home in Springfield after his one term as a member of the House of Representatives in Washington. Then was when he discovered a higher form of proof that the establishment of a fact by a preponderance of evidence. His biographers, Nicolay and Hay, give us the correct background for the Gulliver interview:

"It was at this time, that he gave notable proof of his unusual powers of mental discipline. His wider knowledge of men and things, acquired by contact with a great world, had shown him a certain lack

in himself of close and sustained reasoning. To remedy this defect, he applied himself, after his return from Congress, to such works on logic and mathematics as he fancied to be serviceable. Devoting himself with dogged energy to the task in hand, he soon learned by heart six books of the propositions of Euclid, and he retained through life a thorough knowledge of the principles they contained."—(Nicolay and Hay, i:298-299).

It is to be remembered that Lincoln was at this time forty years old. He had been four times elected a member of the Legislature and had served a term in Congress.

We have another and not less remarkable evidence of Lincoln's power of self-discipline, his determination to gain a post-graduate education. In 1857, he was engaged in what was probably his most important lawsuit, as he then believed, and went to Cincinnati to try the well known Reaper Case, in which he was associated with Edwin M. Stanton. The story is well known how Stanton refused to permit Lincoln to plead and of Lincoln's bitter disappointment, but he did not sit down and sulk about it. He determined to improve his education. Mr. Ralph Emerson, who was his client, had told the story:

"When the hearing was through, Mr. Lincoln called me to him as we left the courtroom, and wanted to walk and talk. For block after block he walked forward, silent and deeply dejected. At last, turning to me, he exclaimed, 'Emerson, I'm going home.' A pause, 'I'm going home to study law.'

" 'Why' I exclaimed, 'Mr. Lincoln, you stand at the head of the bar in Illinois. What are you talking about!'

" 'Yes, yes,' he said, 'I do occupy a good position there, and I think that I can get along with the way things are going there now. But these college trained men who have devoted their whole lives to study are coming west, don't you see? They study on a single case perhaps for months, as we never do. We are apt to catch up the thing as it goes before a jury and trust to the inspiration of the moment. They have got as far as Ohio now. They will soon be in Illinois.'

"Another long pause. Then stopping and turning to me, his countenance suddenly assumed that strong look of determination which we who knew him best sometimes saw on his face, and he exclaimed:

" 'I'm going home to study law! I'm as good as any of them, and when they get out to Illinois, I will be ready for them!'

"He finished and at once became very cheerful, as though he now saw a clear path before him."

Having now considered Lincoln's schooling, both that which he

got and that which he failed to secure, what are we to say about his education?

Abraham Lincoln, when he began his public career, was able to write a neat and legible hand. He was able to think clearly and to state his opinions in well-chosen words. I wonder how many students of Illinois College write as good a hand as Lincoln? How many have as direct and clear and correct a style? Is the English language spoken upon the campus the English learned from the English Department?

Lincoln learned the value of words. It was his custom when reading a book to pronounce each word as he read it. This may have been in part an inheritance from his blab-school days, but it was also a process of verbal evaluation. When he was writing, he wrote slowly, pronouncing each word as he wrote it. He weighed it as he uttered and wrote it. His knowledge of poetry came largely through his ear for words. At New Salem, with its remarkable variety of people, he became acquainted with Jack Kelso, a sort of vagrant elocutionist, who recited poetry to Lincoln and the other young men. The sound of poetry rather than the sight of poetry in print caused Lincoln to love poetry. He learned to love Shakespeare, Byron and Burns from hearing their lines recited. Then he learned to love the reading of them.

Do not undervalue words. Learn the use and value of words. Cultivate an adequate vocabulary, and use words with precision and discrimination. Do not cheapen your utterance by words ill-chosen or with slovenly pronunciation. Had Lincoln been everything else that he was, and lacked eloquence and the power of lucid expression, he never could have risen to the position which he held.

We live in a period in which words are undervalued. One of the perils of the moving-picture lies in the fact that the movies gather groups of people in badly ventilated rooms, where, with considerable eye-strain, they are subject to the play of powerful emotions without words. If we train up a generation whose power of emotion is dissociated from the use of words, we shall have a generation incapable of sustained thought.

Lincoln at Gettysburg said:

"The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

He was mistaken. Memorable as were the deeds performed at Gettysburg, they are less nearly imperishable than his words. The Gettysburg address will be printed and recited for a thousand years after it shall have become necessary to attach foot-notes telling whether the battle of that name occurred in New England during the American Revolution or in Flanders during the World War, or in some other notable conflict not only of armies but of ideals. "The words that I speak unto you," said the Lord Jesus, "they are Spirit, and they are life. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Young men, do not be afraid of eloquence. It is the finest of the fine arts. You have no brush or pallette or canvas, no chisel or mallet or block of marble, no instrument of music, nothing but the human voice and the human ear, and the soul of the orator in contact with the soul of his audience. Yet you can impart knowledge, awaken emotion, paint pictures upon the walls of memory, and influence life choices. There is very little eloquence left at the bar or on the stump, but the pulpit remains the throne of eloquence. If you have character, ability, power in the use of words, and a passionate love of service, aspire to be preachers of the Gospel. There is no nobler calling, no more royal throne of power among men.

So I rate high among the educational attainments of Lincoln his power to use words in written and oral discourses, and I commend to you a thoughtful study of the power of correct and accurate speech.

But education is not complete without its moral quality. Abraham Lincoln's education included a sense of responsibility to God, and a power to influence the lives of men.

Added to all the rest, Abraham Lincoln had a training of sympathy and a discipline of conscience and a strengthening of will which made him quick to discern a duty, and able to act with gentleness, discrimination, decision and firmness.

If education be defined as a wide knowledge of things contained in books, Abraham Lincoln had little of it. He called himself a "mast-fed" lawyer, one who had gotten his scant fattening from what he could root out in the woods, instead of what was thrown to him in the pen. Growing up where, as he said, there was "absolutely nothing to inspire one with ambition to secure an education," he learned what the schools could teach him, and he continued to learn. It is well for us in our childhood to hear what good use Lincoln made of his few

books in youth. It will do us good if we remember that he mastered Euclid at forty, and went home to study law at fifty.

If education be a discipline of mind and character which fits a man to do well his appointed work in the world, Abraham Lincoln was a man of liberal education.

Abraham Lincoln derived an important part of his education from books. If in his boyhood he had been deprived of the small but excellent library which he found available for his instruction, it is impossible to believe that he could ever have attained to greatness. But books, after all, furnished the minor portion of his equipment for life. Lincoln knew a few books, and those few he knew well; but much broader and more comprehensive was his knowledge of men.

It might be said of him as it was said of Jesus, if not in the same degree at least in the same sense, that "He needed not that any should tell him what was in man, for He knew men." Jesus knew the heart of men perfectly; and Lincoln, to an unusual degree, knew what was in men. This is the real test of an education, its value as an element of power among men. Books are of value, but there never was a book as great as the man who made it. Knowledge derived from books is to be highly esteemed, but the measure of its value is its contribution to life. Lincoln did not have to travel far to know men; there were men of almost as many kinds in New Salem as there were in Springfield or New York City. Lincoln knew them, not simply in the sense of knowing their names and being on speaking terms with them, but in the sense of understanding them and believing in them. His view of human nature was not impractically high; he knew the frailty of humanity, and the power of motive; but he also knew that the average man has more good about him than bad. He believed in the average man. It was his conviction that the destinies of the Republic were safer with the great body of the people than with political leaders because the average man's judgment is sound and his conscience true. He knew that a demagogue might fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but he also believed that they could not fool all the people all the time. He had knowledge of humanity, and because he had knowledge he had also faith. He knew men, and he believed in men.

The power of great men to inspire us depends largely upon the degree to which we feel ourselves possessed of interests common to themselves and us. There is little help for us in the example of a man

elevated upon so high a pedestal that his feet are hopelessly out of touch with the ground on which we must stand. Lincoln stands with his feet upon our common soil. He helps us because we have so much in common with him. You students of Illinois College have some special right to a feeling of comradeship with him. It requires very little stretch of the imagination to make him your fellow-student. Yours also is the privilege of using this education, as he so nobly employed his, in the service of God and your country.

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